

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

/060 W

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R 181121Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3400

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, LA

SUBJECT: LAO NEW YEAR

1. PI MAI, LAO NEW YEAR, WAS CELEBRATED IN LUANG PRABANG WITH THE USUAL POPULAR GUSTO AND FESTIVITIES. PARADES WITH BONZES CARRIED ON PALAQUINS, FLOATS, PRETTY GIRLS DRESSED IN FINEST LAO COSTUMES, BANDS, DANCING GROUPS, AND THE USUAL EFFERVESCENCE OF WATER-THROWING, SHIRT-TEARING AND BLACKENING FACES GAVE THE TOWN A SENSE OF EXTRAORDINARY GAIETY. ALL THIS WAS PHOTOGRAPHED BY INNUMERABLE FOREIGNERS, MANY OF WHOM PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY IN THE FESTIVITIES. ESCORTING THESE PARADES WERE WELL-ARMED AND SERIOUS-FACED PATHET LAO SOLDIERS WHO WERE IN FAR GREATER EVIDENCE THAN VIENTIANE SIDE POLICEMEN. MANY PATHET LAO MINISTERS AND SECRETARIES OF STATE WERE ALSO SEEN ON THE STREETS WATCHING THE GOINGS-ON AND VISIBLY WALKING AMONG THE CROWDS.

2. ON THE OFFICIAL SIDE, A ROYAL BACI LASTING 3-1/2 HOURS WAS HELD ON THE MORNING OF THE 16TH. ON THAT OCCASION THE KING AWARDED SOME 100 DECORATIONS INCLUDING SOME OF THE HIGHEST TO ALL THE MINISTERS AND SECRETARIES OF STATE. (THERE HAD BEEN AN EARLIER REPORT  
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THAT PATHET LAO MINISTERS HAD COMPLAINED THEY HAD NEVER

BEEN DECORATED.) AS A RESULT OF THIS LENGTHY CEREMONY, THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE CABINET MEMBERS ARRIVED LATE AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIDENCE WHERE HE HAD INVITED ALL THE CHIEFS OF MISSION FOR CHAMPAGNE. SOUVANNA WAS EUPHORIC AND IN A VERY SENTIMENTAL MOOD, REMARKING HOW HEARTENING IT WAS TO SEE LAO TRADITIONS MAINTAINED BY THE PEOPLE.

3. IN THE EVENING THE USUAL MASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT WAS HELD AT THE PALACE WITH LENGTHY DANCING BY THE ROYAL CORPS OF DANCERS, FOLLOWED BY A LONG EVENING OF EATING, DRINKING, AND DANCING THE LAM VONG. THEIR MAJESTIES FORMED A RECEIVING LINE AND PERSONALLY SHOOK HANDS AND SPOKE A FEW WORDS WITH EACH OF THE CHIEFS OF MISSION, BUT THERE WAS NO OPPORTUNITY TO CHAT PRIVATELY WITH THE KING AS IN YEARS PAST.

4. BOTH AMBASSADOR THUY OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND AMBASSADOR U SAY OF CAMBODIA WERE INVITED TO THE TWO OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS. AS REPORTED SEPARATELY, THE ISSUES OF RECOGNITION OF THEIR GOVERNMENTS WERE NOT ADDRESSED THIS WEEK.

5. BEYOND THE AIR OF GENERAL MERRIMENT, WHAT WAS MOST STRIKING WAS THE DIFFERENCE OF MOOD BETWEEN PATHET LAO LEADERSHIP WHO APPEARED HIGHLY PLEASED AND THE VIENTIANE SIDE MINISTERS AND GENERALS WHO WERE GENERALLY DESPONDENT. THE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA, THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING AT SALA PHOU KHOUN OBVIOUSLY WEIGHED HEAVILY ON THE ATMOSPHERE.  
CHAPMAN

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